



Preserve Summer Time's Best Flavors by Freezing Fresh Fruit

Freezing fruit can be an easy way to enjoy the bounty of your garden and orchard all year round. Compared with other preservation methods, freezing saves time and nutrients, and keeps fruit fresh-tasting and colorful. Follow these guidelines for safe preparation and preservation of peak-of-the-season fruit.

Choose Freezer Containers Carefully

Freeze fruit in containers or bags designed for freezer storage. Rigid plastic containers or glass jars with tight fitting lids work well. Plastic freezer bags are also convenient to use but do not use food storage bags because the plastic in food storage bags is not thick enough to seal in moisture.

Preventing Browning

The cut surfaces of some light-colored fruits such as apples, apricots, peaches and pears darken quickly when exposed to air. You can prevent browning by:

- Sprinkling with a commercial ascorbic acid mixture such as FruitFresh® (use as directed by the manufacturer); or
- Dipping in a solution of vitamin C— prepared by crushing three 500 mg tablets of vitamin C per quart of water; or
- Dipping in a solution of bottled lemon juice—3 tablespoons per quart of water. Fruit dipped in an acid solution must be drained before packing into a freezer container.

Packing Fruit

While you can freeze almost any fruit without sugar, most fruits will have better color, texture and flavor if frozen with some sugar. Fruits packed in syrup are best for dessert; those packed in dry sugar or unsweetened are best for cooking. Adjust cooking recipes for any sugar added in freezing. If freezing fruit to use in making jams or jellies, **do not** add sugar.

Dry, unsweetened fruit. Treat light-colored fruit to prevent browning, drain and pack fruit firmly into a freezer container with no added sugar. Alternately, spread small whole fruits, such as strawberries, or fruit pieces, such as apples, in a single layer on shallow trays (baking sheets) and freeze. Once frozen, remove fruit from the trays and pack into a freezer container.

Dry sugar pack. Treat light-colored fruit to prevent browning, drain and sprinkle fruit with sugar to suit your taste. Mix gently and pack in freezer containers.

Syrup pack. Dessert fruits can be packed in thin, medium, or heavy syrup. Thin syrup will not mask the taste of mild-flavored fruits. Medium syrup is recommended for whole fruits and those that tend to darken. Heavy syrup may be needed for very sour fruits. Syrups for freezing fruits:

Type of Syrup	Percent of Sugar	Percent of Water	Amount of Sugar	Amount of Syrup	Calories per Cup
Thin	30%	4 cups	2 cups	5 cups	308
Medium	40%	4 Cups	3 Cups	5 1/2 Cups	420
Heavy	50%	4 Cups	4 3/4 Cups	6 1/2 Cups	563

Leave 1-inch headspace in each freezer container to allow syrup to expand on freezing.

Suggested Recipes

With a little experimentation, you will find the frozen fruit recipes that you prefer, or try one of the following:

Blackberries, boysenberries, raspberries and strawberries can all be successfully frozen.

Sort berries and wash gently. Drain well. For an unsweetened loose pack, place on trays in a single layer, freeze for 1 to 2 hours, then pack in freezer bags and return to the freezer. For sugar pack, sprinkle sugar on berries and gently mix until sugar is dissolved. Slice strawberries or crush other berries and mix with sugar. Pack in freezer containers. Syrup pack may be used; leave 1-inch headspace.

Try a syrup pack for cherries (sour or sweet). Stem, sort and wash cherries. Drain and pit. Sweet cherries lose color quickly, so add antioxidant to sugar or syrup pack. A sugar pack is recommended for all cherries to help maintain flavor and color. Pack crushed or pureed cherries with sugar and antioxidant. Syrup pack with antioxidant may also be used; leave 1-inch headspace.

Freezing rhubarb, as easy as ‘pie’. Wash, trim, and cut stalks into 1- or 2-inch lengths. Pack raw, or heat in boiling water for 1 minute and chill in ice water to retain better flavor and color. Pack raw rhubarb without sugar, especially if you will cook with the rhubarb later. *Caution: Rhubarb leaves are poisonous. Use stalks only.*

Note: Label and date all packages that are placed in the freezer. For best quality, use frozen fruits within one year.

Resources

Freezing Fruits and Vegetables by Barbara H. Ingham. B3278, University of Wisconsin-Extension. 2000. <http://www1.uwex.edu/ces/pubs/>

USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning, available online:
http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/publications_usda.html

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